Strether is able to identify himself with Parisian life and realise that the evil of Mme. Vionnet is endemic, and as such, pardonable more as a matter for understanding than for judgment.

Chad deserts Mme. de Vionnet without any compunction because he has not achieved moral growth in Europe. He is the ugly American, facetious, romantic and volatile, in contrast to Strether, who is the refined American, responsive, responsible and percipient. Chad's refinement is only superficial, and, despite all his denials to the contrary, he is really tired of Mme. Vionnet ''as he might... of roast mutton for dinner."[8] He, therefore, returns to Woollett to take up the advertising end of his family business, and to turn his attention to "another woman''. He, along with Waymarsh and Jim, comprises the band of "passionless pilgrims" to whom life in Europe is full only of sensual thrill and enjoyment.

Despite Mme. Vionnet's sin of adultery, she is pardonable in as much as she is tragically aware of her own helpless weakness. She tells Strether that she hates herself for being what she is, but then she cannot help being herself. Strether knows that the tragedy of human existence lies in man's helplessness, despite all his knowledge, in the face of the irremediable evil within himself. By condoning Mme. Vionnet, Strether condones the entire human race. To fully grasp the infinite possibilities and unsurmised surprises of life, one should fully "live" it with a sensitive and responsive consciousness. Once Strether achieves a refined awareness of the dynamism of life, the future ceases to hold any terror for him. In her last talk with him, Gostrey asks Strether as to why he desires to go back to his country, and he answers, "1 do not know. There will always be something"[9] His marriage with Mrs. Newsome being out of question, his future is uncertain, but Strether is not at all worried about it. Since he has cultivated "the unattainable art of taking things as they came/'[10] he can take life as it came to him, and make the best of it. Strether's

refinement makes him an artist of the way of life.

Strether's ambassadorial assignment gives him an opportunity to form and exercise his great love of truth, which constitutes the "refinement of his supreme scruple". For him, truth is its own reward, and as such he does not unduly worry himself about his own future. In fact, his discovery of truth results in his sacrificing "an opulent future" with Mrs. Newsome as his wife. There are other rewards, too.